

where people will look at democracy, at liberty and say: It works. Even though I am Muslim, that works for me as a Muslim—where women have a chance to pursue their options, where market forces work.

Our other primary purpose in Iraq must be to make sure our soldiers, who are fighting for us and protecting us and who are engaged there, are properly supported as long as they are there. Our Commander in Chief has made a decision to move additional troops in there; and that those troops are equally supported.

It is, obviously, a difficult and torturous issue for us as a nation because we are a good nation. We do believe genuinely—I ask unanimous consent for an additional 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, will the Senator from New Hampshire yield for a question?

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, if I could complete a quick thought and then turn to the Senator for his question, my thought was this: This is obviously a torturous issue for us as a nation, because we are basically a very good people. And our history shows that when we use force, we use it for the purposes of trying to free people, of giving people more options and a better lifestyle. We did it during World War I and World War II, and we did it throughout the Cold War. Our success is extraordinary. We have never sought territorial gain, and we do not. We seek to give people the opportunity to pursue the liberties and freedoms which were defined so brilliantly by our Founding Fathers. When we see something such as Iraq, where there seems to be such an inability of the culture to grasp these concepts, even though we are trying as hard as we can to give them that option, it is difficult.

But we still can't take our eye off the ball, which is to basically recognize that we are doing this for our national defense, as we try to stabilize a region that represents an immediate threat to us and has already damaged us more than any other event in our history has damaged us, other than potentially Pearl Harbor, and that we have troops in the field who need to be supported.

I yield to the Senator from Texas for a question.

Mr. CORNYN. I agree with the argument the Senator from New Hampshire has made about the importance of our prosecuting the war against terror and particularly what has been called by the terrorists themselves "the central front in the war on terror" in Iraq.

Some of our colleagues have introduced a resolution, which the Senator has spoken to, which is a nonbinding sense-of-the-Senate resolution. I heard others this morning talk about imposing caps on the number of troops we might deploy there.

I ask the distinguished Senator from New Hampshire, if it is so important that we not fail in Iraq and that the re-

gion not descend into either a failed state or a launching pad for future terrorist attacks or a regional conflict ensue, does he not believe it would be important for those who criticize the President's announced plan to offer a constructive alternative of their own, if they believe that the President's chosen plan is not the best course of action?

Mr. GREGG. Answering the Senator through the Chair, that seems to me to be the logical approach. As I mentioned earlier, there are some who seem to want the language of opposition but don't want the responsibility of opposition. If the case is that some believe we should have immediate withdrawal, then that ought to be put on the table in a context which would have the force of law and effect, and let us vote on that. I would vote against it, but let us vote on it.

Mr. CORNYN. If the Senator will yield for one final question.

Mr. GREGG. Yes, I yield to the Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Notwithstanding the fact that we have a number of our colleagues running for President of the United States in 2008, and notwithstanding the fact that obviously we have Senators of different party affiliation, Republican and Democrat, isn't a matter of national security exactly the kind of issue that should rise above partisan divisions and upon which we should work to find common ground so we can protect the national security of the United States? I ask the Senator whether he believes that perhaps we have let our guard down and let this discourse become too political in nature rather than solution oriented?

Mr. GREGG. Responding to the Senator through the Chair, the Senator makes a good point. My big concern goes to the morale of the troops in the field. What are they thinking? What are they thinking as a young 19-, 20-, 22-year-old soldier in Iraq today when they hear this discourse going forward and they are asked to go out on patrol, and they are told that maybe the troops their military leadership says it needs to support them is an issue? It is a legitimate issue as to how long we should allow this to hang out there. Let's have the debate. Let's resolve our national position as to what it is going to be, at least for the next year, if we get that far, and resolve it so that we know where we are; otherwise, we do harm to our national policy, because it is so disruptive to have this many voices at the same time claiming legitimacy and, more importantly, it does harm to our troops in the field, which is my primary concern.

I thank the Senator from Texas for his questions and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized to

speak for up to 10 minutes, followed by the Senator from Michigan for 10 minutes, followed by the Senator from Colorado for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments made by the Senator from New Hampshire, Mr. GREGG, with regard to his concerns about the public debate in this body on the progress of the war against terrorism and, specifically, the role of the conflict in Iraq. I have to express some deep concern that on an issue so important to our national security, on the type of matter where we have historically said partisan differences should not extend beyond our shorelines, that we ought to try to work harder to find some solution to this problem for our country. I couldn't agree more with the Senator from New Hampshire: This is a matter of America's national interest and America's national security. That is our No. 1 responsibility. That ought to be our focus. We ought to focus on that like a laser and not be distracted by anything else.

I have heard, in addition to non-binding sense-of-the-Senate resolutions being offered, expressing disapproval of the President's proposed plan, suggestions this morning by the Senator from Illinois that he wants to put a cap on the number of troops that can be deployed in the battlefield. Perhaps there will be other efforts that come forward to try to one-up the other proposal, to micromanage the conduct of this very grave and serious matter which so directly affects our national security. While I disagree fundamentally that we ought to have any suggestion to our troops and to those who are in harm's way that we are going to undermine their efforts by cutting off funds to support our troops during a time of war or whether we are going to send non-binding sense-of-the-Senate resolutions in a way that will only encourage our enemies and undermine our war effort, or whether we are going to try to micromanage the conduct of the war rather than to rely upon the senior military leadership who has advised the President and been so much a part of the proposal that the President has made, I think this is all extraordinarily premature.

I hope if there is one thing we can all agree on, it is that we have a chance to be successful in Iraq. I know there are those who differ on what success would mean. The President has talked in impressive terms about his vision of establishing a democratic beachhead in Iraq in an area with too few democracies, because the fact is, democracies don't wage war against other democracies. It would be helpful to the long-term stability of the Middle East if that were successful. But I hear people giving up on that vision and saying: Well, the most we can hope for is what the Iraq Study Group said, which is to provide an Iraq that can be sustained, governed, and defended by the Iraqi people.

I would be satisfied at this time if we were able to accomplish that goal. I would hope that would be a goal we could all embrace. But I know there are two ways to fail in achieving that goal. One would be to give up and to have a precipitous withdrawal of our troops or to cut off funds to support our troops now or to try to micromanage from Washington, DC, how many troops are in the field or under what circumstances, what the rules of engagement might be. The other way is to actually try to see whether the President's proposal demonstrates any improvement or progress in Iraq, which I would think we would all welcome, if, in fact, that happens. But of course, we can't guarantee that. No one knows whether that plan will be successful for sure. I do believe the President has attempted to get advice from the very best military minds available—people such as GEN David Petraeus, who hopefully will be confirmed here shortly to serve as the head of coalition forces in Iraq; people such as Admiral Fallon, who will take over as CENTCOM commander—while continuing to rely on the advice of people such as GEN George Casey and GEN John Abizaid, whom those two gentlemen will be succeeding.

It strikes me as odd to say we are going to give up on this new plan, which many have clamored for months and maybe even years, before we have even had a chance to implement it. Indeed, the fact is we have had as many as 160,000 troops in Iraq at any given time, where now we have approximately 130,000. And even this so-called surge will not bring us up to the maximum number of troops we have had in Iraq at any given period of time.

I think we ought to take a moment and think about what is being proposed here in terms of nonbinding sense-of-the-Senate resolutions, attempts to micromanage the conduct of the war and the battlefield, because I truly believe if we are to allow Iraq to descend into a failed state, that it will, like Afghanistan did after the Soviet Union left, serve as a launching pad for terrorist organizations to train, recruit, and launch terrorist attacks to other parts of the world, including the United States, and that more American civilians will die as a result.

Of course, there is also the issue of a regional conflict. We have already heard from people such as the Saudis that if, in fact, the Iranians take advantage of the Shiites' momentum in Iraq in that there is ethnic cleansing of Sunnis in Iraq, that likely the Saudis will come in in an effort to prevent the ethnic cleansing of Sunnis, and there will certainly be other countries drawn into what will be a regional conflict.

It is not only responsible for the critics of the President's plan to say what they would do differently, but also to explain how they are going to deal with the consequences of a regional conflict in Iraq, should that happen. I do believe that is likely to happen unless we

try to see whether the President's plan, in consultation with bipartisan groups such as the Iraq Study Group and in consultation with the very best military minds in the world, has a chance of success.

I don't know of any American who would not support an effort to win and to stabilize Iraq, to provide a means for it to govern itself and defend itself if, in fact, that is in the best interest of the United States, which I believe it is.

Mr. KERRY. Would the Senator allow me to interrupt for a request and I will ask unanimous consent that the interruption not show in his comments?

Mr. CORNYN. I don't know what the interruption is for.

Mr. KERRY. I want to make request to get into the order, if I could.

Mr. CORNYN. I would prefer if the Senator wait until after I am through talking rather than interrupt my comments. I have no objection if he would like to be added to the end of the current unanimous consent request to be recognized after the Senator from Colorado. I ask unanimous consent that that be the case.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, let me mention one other subject while I am up, and that has to do with the comments of the distinguished Senator from Oregon about Medicare prescription drugs and the success of the Part D Medicare prescription drug program. I don't know of many governmental programs that have met with more success than this prescription drug program, in terms of the acceptance of America's seniors and the way it has allowed them to get access to prescription drugs at a reasonable cost that they were never able to access before. But I do have grave concerns about those who would attempt to basically interfere with that successful program by imposing Federal controls on the price for which these pharmaceuticals may be charged under the guise of some negotiation. When the Federal Government negotiates with a private entity, there is no real negotiation; it is a take-it-or-leave-it proposition.

I pose as exhibit A to support that the current VA health care system, which is held out as a model by which this kind of negotiation could go forward. The fact is, the VA system is pointed to as a model by which this Government negotiation could occur, and today that system does not supply nearly the variety of pharmaceuticals to its beneficiaries the Medicare system does.

I have read in various places that the number ranges from 19 percent—I have heard as high as 30 percent—of the drugs that are available to Medicare beneficiaries are available to veterans under the VA system because of this feature. So when you impose price con-

trols, which is what is being advocated by those who want to change the current successful system of Medicare prescription drugs, basically, what we are going to find is a rationing effect. I would think that would be the last thing any of us would want to do—to ration the prescription drugs available to our seniors under the enormously successful Medicare Part D reform we passed in 2003.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to speak to the Medicare prescription drug benefit. I have a different view, and the Michigan seniors and people with disabilities who are trying to access this program have a different experience and view than my friend from Texas.

As I said yesterday, I think it is incredibly important that we join with the House of Representatives to do the first step, which is to require negotiation for the best price on prescription drugs through Medicare. I also know there is incredible confusion, that seniors have been offered a variety of private choices but not the one that most seniors asked for, which is to be able to go through Medicare and sign up as they do for Part B and the rest of Medicare and get a good price. I also know there is great concern from seniors who find themselves in this gap, somehow being called a doughnut hole, but the gap in coverage where you continue to pay a premium but don't receive any help. There are a number of concerns I hope we are going to address.

Number 1 needs to be to say clearly that we want the Secretary to negotiate the best price for people. Right now, as we know, the law actually prohibits, actually stops the Secretary from using the bargaining power of all of the seniors and the people with disabilities on Medicare to be able to get the best price. Why in the world does that make sense? In fact, it doesn't make sense—particularly for something that is lifesaving; it is the major way we provide health care today from a preventive and maintenance standpoint, as well as in a crisis.

There are huge differences between the way the Veterans' Administration successfully serves our veterans and what is being done through, unfortunately, inflated prices through the Medicare system that not only seniors are paying, disabled are paying, but taxpayers are paying as well.

Yesterday, I talked about a report—and I want to talk to that today—from Families U.S.A. released last week, which looked at 20 prescription drugs commonly used by seniors. The results are startling. The report compares the prices the private Medicare Part D plans charge and the prices obtained by the VA, which negotiates for low drug prices on behalf of America's veterans.